

In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Message from the Mayor

Last week, the members of the DC Council did our city a great service. In a vote of 6-4-3, the Council approved the financing plan for a baseball stadium on the Anacostia waterfront. With the vote, the Council took a crucial step towards finalizing our plans for bringing baseball back to DC and revitalizing the Anacostia waterfront. We're now closer to creating 3,500 jobs in our city, generating at least \$15 million in new tax revenue annually, and realizing the community benefits from an investment of \$450 million.

However, the vote does not mark the end of this process. Details must be hammered out and decisions must still be made. I look forward to continuing to work with the Council, faith, labor and civic leaders as well as the business community to make sure our dream of a revitalized Anacostia waterfront becomes a reality.

Let me clarify some of the issues raised during last week's Council session. The Baseball Stadium Agreement spells out in broad language the responsibilities and obligations of the city, the Sports Commission and Major League Baseball. It's an umbrella agreement.

Follow-on agreements, including the RFK stadium lease agreement, the new ballpark agreement, and the construction administration agreement, will address specifics. Issues raised in recent weeks and during the Council session by Chairman Linda Cropp will be carefully considered and discussed.

For example, in the current agreement there's a tough compensatory damages provision that holds our feet to the fire to get this project done on time, and I want our feet to be held to the fire. At the same time, I recognize there are concerns about the potential impact of this provision. The team owners who will be involved in this community for many years know that this deal must work for everyone, and so I'm confident that in discussions with the Sports Commission and team owners, we will address concerns such as this. I am also confident that the construction professionals the Sports Commission has engaged and will engage to build this ballpark have proven track records of success in building major projects on time.

The Council vote followed an exciting event at Union Station to officially unveil the name of the new team: the Washington Nationals. I was joined by Nationals President Tony Tavares, DC Sports and Entertainment Commission Chairman Mark Tuohey, and the Nationals' General Manager Jim Bowden for this announcement.

As we finalize the bill, I will continue to work to ensure that baseball returns to DC and is a benefit to the entire city.

As I've been saying for three months now, baseball is about community—it's for everyone. And it's also about transforming our Anacostia waterfront into a center of opportunity. So we're one step closer to a new home for a Major League Baseball team: the Washington Nationals!



District's Bonds Upgraded

Two weeks ago, our city's Chief Financial Officer Natwar M. Gandhi announced that Standard & Poor's upgraded the District's general obligation bonds to A with a stable outlook from A-, while Fitch Ratings revised its rating outlook for the District to positive from stable.

This is great news for our city as we move forward with our priorities to better serve our citizens. These ratings were a response to the District's recent sale of \$400 million of general obligation bonds to fund its fiscal year 2005 capital improvement program.

Our dedication to balanced budgets and fiscal responsibility is a national model, and DC is getting recognition for this success. In the past two years, states and cities across the country have seen their credit ratings downgraded or put on watch. It's good news to have such positive ratings because they will save the city millions of dollars in interest on its debt.

In its report, Standard & Poor's wrote: "The upgrade reflects a track record of seven consecutive years of operating surpluses; and strict financial policies and practices that significantly reduce the risk of future financial difficulties, including statutory reserve levels at 7 percent of revenues and ongoing budget oversight and approval by congress, with clearly defined triggers that would reinstate the control period."

I am pleased that Standard & Poor's and Fitch have recognized the city's growing financial stability. The CFO is preparing our eighth consecutive balanced budget. We currently have substantial cash reserves, and we have a fund balance of \$900 million and growing.

We have succeeded in controlling expenditures and protecting the revenue stream—and that means protecting our priorities. Thanks go to the CFO's office for working so hard to make this happen.

Community Profile Vernon B. Fitzgerald

Vernon B. Fitzgerald has been volunteering five days a week for more than three years at Vision DC's Kids in Need Resource Center, a non-profit that provides free school supplies to DC public school teachers. The Ward 5 resident and native Washingtonian is a retired DC school employee who believes that "children come first."

She faithfully comes in every day to sort and stock school supplies, answer phones, plan special events, and recruit additional volunteers. "She has been a God-send," Elaine Saunders, program manager of Vision DC, said. "Vernon couldn't be more committed."

As someone who worked for more than 20 years in the local school system as a teacher and cafeteria worker, Vernon understands the lack of resources and the need to help students. "You can't live in this world by yourself," Vernon said.



She recruits her family members, including her grandchildren, to volunteer at the center. She also remembers staff and volunteer birthdays and is an active member of Pleasant Lane Baptist Church. Vernon was named the 2002 Volunteer of the Year for Vision DC.

Vision DC's Kids in Need Resource Center, a program of World Vision, allows local teachers that serve low-income neighborhoods to "shop" regularly for supplies and resources needed by their students. Teachers come on designated days to pick up donated items that help their students be successful learners. The center serves thousands of teachers a year, touching the lives of tens of thousands students in the District of Columbia. For more information, contact Vision DC at (202) 635-7600.

Vernon is the March 2004 adult winner of the Mayor's Community Service Award sponsored by Serve DC. If you would like to nominate a youth or adult for the monthly award, visit www.serve.dc.gov for nomination information, or call (202) 727-9461.



Hispanic Heritage Poster Contest

Professional artists and students older than 18 are invited to compete for the \$2,500 grand prize in our city's first Hispanic Yellow Pages Poster Contest.

The contest is sponsored by VEGA Hispanic Yellow Pages (the leading Spanish Yellow Book in the US), the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and the Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs to promote Hispanic heritage throughout the greater Washington DC metropolitan area. The poster theme should be the artist's interpretation or rendition of Hispanic heritage in the DC area.

The winning poster will be reproduced on the front cover of the VEGA Yellow Pages 20th edition, and will also be adapted for other promotional items such as billboards, T-shirts, and programs.

A blue ribbon panel consisting of area dignitaries, Hispanic sports celebrities, and local television news personalities will judge the winning entry on February 15, 2005. The award and unveiling celebration will be held on March 29, 2005, jointly with the 20th Anniversary celebration of the VEGA Hispanic Yellow Pages.

The contest runs until February 11, 2005. Entries received after the date will not be accepted. Artwork will not be accepted unless accompanied by a signed and completed application form. Please download applications and rules at any of these three websites:

- www.dcartz.dc.gov
- www.vegadcpages.com
- www.ola.dc.gov

Tips for Safe Holidays from the District

The holiday season is in full swing, and Robert Spagnoletti, the attorney general for the District of Columbia, wants to ensure residents have a worry-free online shopping experience. At the same time, our Fire and Emergency Medical Services Chief Adrian H. Thompson is urging residents to look for and eliminate potential dangers that could cause fires and injuries.

Here are a few tips from the attorney general about safe shopping on the internet:

- To be eligible for greater consumer protection, pay with a credit card rather than sending a check or cash.
- Know who the online seller is before you purchase. When in doubt, confirm the online seller's physical address and phone number.
- Never email your personal information, like your credit card number. If you get an email or pop-up message that asks for personal information, like a credit card number, do not reply or click on the link in the message.
- Know exactly what you are buying. Read the seller's description of the product closely, especially the fine print disclosures. Words like "refurbished," "vintage," or "close-out" may indicate that the product is in less-than-mint condition, while name-brand items with "too-good-to-be-true" prices could be counterfeits.

For additional consumer protection information, including how to complain about a consumer problem, visit <http://oag.dc.gov> and click on Consumer Protection and Antitrust. If you are unable to resolve a problem with a seller, call the Office of the Attorney General's Consumer Hotline at (202) 442-9828.

Here are a few holiday safety tips from FEMS Chief Adrian Thompson:

- Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with safety standards. Use only lights that have fused plugs.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked down.



Juvenile Justice Bill Signing

On November 29, I signed the Omnibus Juvenile Justice Act of 2004, which I first introduced in December 2003. This bill helps our city ensure fair treatment of children in the juvenile justice system. It also holds offenders accountable for their actions as appropriate, while strengthening family and parental involvement and protecting the safety of the community. The Council passed the final version of the legislation on November 9 this year.

This Act has been one of my top legislative priorities, particularly given the recent increase in the unauthorized use of vehicle offenses by juveniles in Ward 7. This summer, I unveiled a comprehensive plan in Ward 7 that brought the community, parents, and government agencies together to address this issue. Part of the Omnibus Juvenile Justice Act was passed on an emergency basis and announced as a key component to this effort.

The Omnibus Juvenile Justice Act of 2004 has taken several years of hard work and was nurtured by the development of unique partnerships. It's the result of efforts by many people in our city's communities and government and it will benefit all residents in the District.

The act accomplishes many things: First, it will ensure due process for juveniles. It also enhances our law enforcement efforts by allowing police and social services agencies to share confidential information regarding juvenile offenses. It improves our ability to deal with violent juvenile offenders by setting clear timeframes for the courts.

Furthermore, it sends a strong message of accountability by requiring judges to make determinations regarding a child's need for care before dismissing a case. At the same time, it protects the rights of victims by securing greater participation for victims in juvenile proceedings, while strengthening family involvement in the juvenile justice system by requiring active participation of parents.

And, last but not least, it ensures the rehabilitation of committed juveniles through individual treatment plans and periodic evaluations. In the end, with this bill we've provided some very important tools to our government agencies and to the courts to help prevent juvenile crime, hold offenders accountable and give victims a stronger voice in our justice system. We've taken a big step forward in improving our city's juvenile justice system.

National League of Cities Presidency

On December 4, I was proud to be elected president of the Washington, DC-based National League of Cities (NLC). I plan to use the position in part to enlighten thousands of city officials and people across the country about the District's efforts for autonomy from the federal government and for voting rights in the US Congress.

The election was held as 3,000 elected officials gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana, for the 81st Annual Congress of Cities and Exposition. At the event, city and town officials from across the United States gathered to develop policies to partner with the federal government on critical issues such as transportation, local law enforcement and social programs.



It was an honor to be elected president of a group as distinguished and diverse as the National League of Cities. As president, I pledge to serve as a steadfast advocate for cities and towns before members of Congress and Administration officials. I'll work hard to represent cities all across America, while educating people about the lack of Congressional voting representation for the citizens of the District of Columbia.

Upon my induction, I unveiled a plan, "A National City Network," to bring together and enhance existing NLC strengths, capacities and specific activities. The plan includes a revamped internet portal, www.nlc.org, which will serve as an information hub for cities across America and an interactive networking hub for cities and towns.

The National League of Cities is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal governments throughout the United States. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance. Working in partnership with 49 state municipal leagues, the NLC serves as a national resource to and an advocate for the more than 18,000 cities, villages, and towns it represents. For more information visit www.nlc.org.



District Activities



The 8th annual Norway Tree Lighting Ceremony was held at Union Station on November 30. Ambassador Knut Vollebaek and Princess Martha Louise officially presented the tree to Washington, DC, on behalf of the City of Oslo.



Mayor Williams is flanked by Richard Fairbank, founder of Capital One, and actor Bruce Willis, who joined him December 6 at Kennedy Recreation Center to announce a national scholarship program to benefit foster care children.

Community News

- [Mayor Announces Blue Ribbon Commission on Future of Libraries](#)
- [Residents Urged to Take Advantage of College Savings Plan, Tax Benefits](#)
- [11th Electoral College in the District of Columbia Convened December 13](#)

[View All News Releases](#)

Upcoming Events

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| 12/11 | Ward 5 Transportation Summit
11 am – 2 pm
2725 10th Street NE
7th floor
Contact: Sharlene Reed (202) 671-2407
sharlene.reed@dc.gov |
| 12/13 | Mayor Anthony A. Williams Fifth Annual Holiday Party and Children's Gift Drive
6 pm – 8 pm
Reeves Center
2000 14th Street NW
Contact: Mayor's Office of Community Affairs (202) 442-8150 |
| 12/21 | Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs Open House
1 pm – 4:30 pm
441 4th Street NW
Suite 805 South
Contact: Janet Chou (202) 727-3120
janet.chou@dc.gov |

